




Influence of information credibility of Instagram posts on tourist decision-making behaviour

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ABSTRACT

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This research tries to identify the influence of Instagram posts on the decision-making behaviour of tourists. Social media plays a pivotal role in today's travel and tourism environment. It also determines how people perceive and choose a destination. Social media acts as a platform for people to discuss and share about travel adventures, providing detailed information that can widely influence the decision-making process among visitors. Response to social media sharing and information credibility are the independent variables. Prior knowledge and tourist decision-making are the dependent variables. The research also studies the moderating role of the authenticity of social media posts in shaping tourists' responses and choices. An online survey was conducted to collect primary data from 511 Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) respondents. The sampling design adopted was stratified random sampling. Analysis of moment structures (AMOS) was used to analyse the quantitative data collected. A structural equation modelling approach was used to analyse the data. The study reveals that Instagram and other platforms transform intangible aspects of destinations into tangible experiences, enriching tourists' knowledge. Influencers and user-generated content play a crucial role in decision-making. The authenticity of the post plays a crucial role in shaping the tourist's decision-making process.

Contribution/Originality: The role of authenticity in Instagram posts has been examined here. This study was conducted in Delhi, India's National Capital Region (NCR). An original model has been developed to understand the tourists' decision-making behaviour.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet and digital technology have increasingly influenced global economic growth. A technological revolution has already started conquering the world, which has resulted in a rapid and noticeable development in all economic, social, and industrial sectors. This revolution has facilitated the rapid, easy, and economical global sharing of knowledge and information. Innovations in internet-based technologies have had the most drastic impact on the tourism industry. A country's growth and progression are determined by its level of knowledge and the technology and communications it employs (Alsarayreh, Jawabreh, ALkharabsheh, & Aldahamsheh, 2011). Recent technological breakthroughs have an impact on travel circumstances and tourist behaviour. With the information gleaned through social media and the Internet, the online travel industry provides its consumers with an extensive range of tourism goods and services.

In the global travel market, the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies has opened multiple travel communities, forums, blogs, and websites mainly created for travel reviews and social networks (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013). Travelers from all over the world can access a wealth of travel-related information on these platforms. Undoubtedly, the primary components that drive this online travel guide are user-generated content (UGC) and customer-generated content (CGC). The information is easily navigable, classified according to the kind of goods and services, and available on both commercial and non-commercial platforms. Furthermore, according to Xiang and Gretzel (2010), social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Vimeo, and other serve as hubs for consumer-generated media and content, and their proliferation is a result of the enrichment of Web 2.0 applications. It's also vital to note that social media is becoming increasingly crucial in many facets of tourism nowadays (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2012) especially when arranging trips and making decisions about them (Alper, 2017). Muñoz and Amaral (2011) established a strong correlation between the frequency of internet usage and decisions about travel, including booking and planning.

The tourist industry is one area where social media's influence has been particularly noticeable. There have been some exciting advancements in the tourism sector in recent years. Even though most social media sites have only become popular recently, they still need to develop into vital resources for managers, customers, and destination marketers regarding information sharing and gathering. Numerous sources of information are available, including blog posts, notes, videos, marketplace assessments, marketplace evaluations, and tags on a post (Hamid, Wee, Hanafiah, & Asri, 2016; Koo, Chung, & Kim, 2015). A study by Khadka and Khadka (2023) indicates that an increasing number of people post comments on evaluations they read online.

Once travellers have completed their pre-trip planning and decision-making, social media still impacts the actual "travelling" phase of the trip once they reach their destination. While on an actual trip, some travellers share an image or story that conveys their experiences on social media in real-time. Some examples are creating and sharing movies or vlogs, keeping a travel journal or blog, and sharing pictures on Instagram and other social media sites. When travellers return home after their journey, the narrative stays the same. Some people provide fresh knowledge for the next group of prospective travellers by sharing their personal experiences and opinions about the place(s) they have visited (Agbi, 2019) either in private with friends and family or in public with the general public.

Social media has become a significant informational hub for tourists, similar to UGC websites (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Buultjens, 2009). Travellers have increasingly relied on UGC and travel review websites like TripAdvisor when looking for information and deciding on their destinations. Travellers can assess the best restaurants, lodging options, tourist attractions, historical and cultural sites, and restaurants with user ratings ranked in different categories on travel review websites. Providing consumers with reliable, unbiased, and non-commercial reviews of those products and services is one of these websites' most important roles.

The tourism sector is becoming increasingly competitive, and service providers are turning to Internet technology to gain and keep a competitive edge. Many social media users read online reviews and make travelogues when planning trips. Social media sites have become an excellent tool for word-of-mouth marketing in the travel industry. People's encounters with UGC regarding a place often lead to opinions and prejudices about that location (Karim, 2019). Most travel lovers use social media to plan vacations, study places, and gather ideas for travel-related issues, such as lodging, restaurants, activities, and attractions. It has become more common for travellers to use social media apps and social networking sites before visiting tourist spots.

Low cost, extensive coverage, complete functions, and flexible characteristics characterise network tourism information, quickly taking the lead over all other forms of tourist information sources as the most significant source of travel knowledge. Travellers can invest a short amount of time to access online tourism-related information, such as typical competitive prices, prior travel agency reliability, and more, which helps them achieve information symmetry. As a result, the Internet lessens reliance on conventional tourist industry information, and

traveller decision-making is crucial (Liu, Yang, & Pu, 2015). The authors figured out that there is a more significant variation in the impact of Internet information on different age groups of tourists.

Customers nowadays are more likely to seek information through WOM when unfamiliar with a service provider. Tour travel planning relies heavily on external information sources such as WOM (Murphy, Mascardo, & Benckendorff, 2007). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is primarily available through consumer evaluations and ratings. According to a study on the use and effects of internet travel reviews, compared to men, women read these evaluations before making decisions to generate ideas and have more fun (Kyung-Hyan & Ulrike, 2009). Strong determinants of travellers' acceptance of information from online reviews on lodgings include product rating, information correctness, information relevance, and information availability (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). The findings of Saravana Kumar and Krishnaraj (2015) indicate that most travellers look at reviews on travel websites before deciding where to go and how long to stay. Positive information contributes to business growth, whereas negative information, i.e., bad reviews, has a detrimental impact on destination choice (Vaddeswaram & Saravana Kumar, 2019).

Online information has helped provide signals on the quality of products, potentially bridging information gaps between buyers and sellers in online marketplaces, thereby influencing buyer decisions (Hu, Liu, & Zhang, 2008). However, to mislead and deceive clients, spammers generate and spread opinion-based disinformation, i.e., fake information as reviews (Paul & Nikolaev, 2021). Since social media platforms like Facebook, Yelp, and TripAdvisor have integrated review systems, counterfeit reviews are expected to appear there. These reviews pretend to be accurate to deceive customers and give certain businesses unfair competitive advantages due to their low cost and high-profit margin. Fake information generally degrades information quality (Zhang, Li, Cheng, & Lai, 2017) harming reviews' reputation and helpfulness (Zhao, Yang, Narayan, & Zhao, 2013) which are the primary considerations that new customers make while perusing reviews prior to making purchases (Gambetti & Han, 2023).

Authenticity is vital in the tourism industry. Travellers look for unforgettable experiences that are authentic and unspoiled through top-notch and contemporary attractions (Ram, Björk, & Weidenfeld, 2016). Travellers are more likely to return and suggest a place when the requirement for authenticity is satisfied (Chen, Zhou, Zhan, & Zhou, 2020). Authenticity can boost travellers' desire to return (Anshori, Karya, Fatmasari, & Herlambang, 2020). However, unlike Mujihestia, Hussein, and Troena (2018) authenticity does not influence the intention to revisit. Travellers utilise social media platforms to arrange trips and suggest places to visit. Globally prevalent social media dramatically influences tourism, especially how travellers make decisions (Li, Larimo, & Leonidou, 2021). A study states that authenticity significantly impacts destination image (Maarif, Ratnawati, & Hapsari, 2023).

The availability of information, reflecting a destination's unique history, can significantly influence tourists' perceptions of authenticity and social media, thereby fostering the development of a specific region. Travel influencers and bloggers, magazines, celebrities, television, the Internet, and other sources of information can unintentionally spread information about tourist destinations through social media, which can ultimately impact how tourists perceive the destination. Yu, Li, Yu, He, and Zhou (2021) pointed out that social media communications are a global phenomenon affecting how travellers obtain information before making decisions.

1.1. Problem Statement

The advancement of technology and the worldwide dissemination of media offer novel platforms for tourists to exchange knowledge via blogs, websites, or destination evaluation platforms like Booking.com and TripAdvisor.com. Destinations must employ innovative and effective social media marketing techniques to connect with these prospective travellers. In the global tourism market, information is a competitive advantage. Still, the only destination that can advantage over this advantage is the one that can deliver information more quickly, emotionally appealingly, and cheaply. Travellers have utilised social media as an interactive marketing tool for

advertising. However, new problems arose in the travel industry. Authenticity suffers as the number social media users rises. Many issues, like duplicate accounts, fake reviews, etc., make it difficult for an end user to discriminate between genuine and fake social media posts. Because there is a lot of information available on social media, getting authentic information is difficult. However, some strategies work better than others, such as novelty. A destination's ability to satisfy visitors depends on several interrelated factors, emphasising the importance of strategic and integrated planning and the targeted application of particular tools and approaches.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Social media has transformed how individuals plan, secure, and experience travel, and tour operators use it to connect with existing and new travellers and promote their businesses. The Internet's widespread use and the acceptance of social media sites have forced travel businesses to modify their marketing plans according to the needs of current trends. Social media can help travel destinations stay competitive by using innovation, engaging content, and encouraging and supporting interactive communication. In many ways, social media platforms are involved in selecting travel destinations. However, there is still a need for research on social media use, post authenticity, and location choice. The main subject of current research is the different forms and routes of communication and information dissemination for tourists. The findings of the present study give an insight into the impact that the authenticity of a social media post creates on the decision-making behaviour of tourists through a structural equation modelling-based approach. This research aims to facilitate enhancing destination-specific marketing strategies for increasing the number of tourists in a particular destination.

1.3. Structure of the Paper

The structure of this research paper comprises six sections: (1) Introduction, (2) Literature Review, (3) Research Methodology, (4) Statistical Analysis and Findings, (5) Discussion, and (6) Conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Response to Social Media Sharing and Prior Knowledge

Pradhani and Hendijani (2023) pointed out that Instagram has a vital and decisive role in making the intangible characteristics of many destinations tangible. Instagram posts, such as pictures and videos, give a destination a visual dimension. This visual dimension of a destination provides prior knowledge about the place the tourist is interested in. Further, another study examined the response of travellers to social media sharing by evaluating the consistency and availability of information found on these platforms and the level of utilisation by travellers during their travel planning. Social media platforms, in general, and Instagram, in particular, have a significant and influential role in shaping tourists' decisions regarding their chosen destinations by offering appealing and reliable visual content. The positive narratives shared on social media and subjective norms further shape tourists' intentions to visit particular destinations (Qian, 2023). Self-congruity and trust mediate the link between information quality and travel intention, demonstrating the beneficial effects of social media on travel intentions (Mohamad, Tan, & Tan, 2022). Tourists actively engage with social media platforms to share their travel experiences and seek validation within online communities, significantly influencing their behavioural intention to visit specific destinations (Tanković, Bilić, & Sohor, 2022). The utilisation of social networks, communication, and information-seeking behaviours on these platforms significantly impacts the decision-making process in destination selection (Tanković & Mušanović, 2022).

2.2. Response to Social Media Sharing and Tourist Decision Making

Researchers Nadalipour, Hassan, Bhartiya, and Shah (2023) and Kapoor (2022) observed that tourists responded positively to the role of social media sites in tourism. Further, they emphasised the role of UGC and

social media influencers in determining the tourist's decision. Furthermore, social media platforms are valuable channels for tourists to share and convey their travel experiences, be it positive or negative, and engage with destination points (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2016). Tourists actively engage with shared content on platforms like Instagram, influencing their perceptions and preferences during the destination selection (Pradhani & Hendijani, 2023). Assessing destination websites for their effectiveness as marketing channels in tourism is crucial, with attributes such as content, usability, and persuasiveness playing a vital role in user-perceived quality (Charles, Novabos, Matias, & Miguela, 2014). The availability of destination information and WOM propagation through social media sites considerably influences the selection of tourist destinations (Ivana, Biljana, & Marina, 2022). Using sentiment analysis techniques to evaluate data from social media sites like Twitter and Instagram could identify the most representative entities and insights mentioned by travellers and give valuable insights to tourism managers, researchers, and practitioners (Marlon & Luis, 2022). These ratings have a significant impact on the selection of tourist accommodations, a process moderated by the volume and extent of reviews and individual exposure to social influence (Diana, Martínez-Navarro, & Fernández-Lores, 2017). Assessing destination websites for their effectiveness as marketing channels in tourism is crucial, with attributes such as content, usability, and persuasiveness playing a vital role in user-perceived quality. Table 1 presents a comprehensive review of existing studies examining how social media sharing affects tourists' prior knowledge and decision-making processes.

Table 1. Review of studies on the influence of response of social media sharing on prior knowledge and tourist decision-making.

Author	Year	Influence of response of social media sharing towards prior knowledge/Tourist's decision making
Pradhani and Hendijani (2023)	2023	Positive: Social media enhances prior knowledge
Qian (2023)	2023	Positive: Shapes decisions with appealing visual content
Mohamad et al. (2022)	2022	Positive: Information quality mediates travel intentions
Tanković et al. (2022)	2022	Positive: Influences behavioural intention to visit
Nadalipour et al. (2023)	2023	Positive: Social media influencers shape decisions
Kapoor (2022)	2022	Varied: Examines both positive and negative responses
Huertas and Marine-Roig (2016)	2016	Varied: Platforms serve as valuable channels
Ivana et al. (2022)	2022	Positive: Influences the selection of tourist destinations
Charles et al. (2014)	2014	Varied: Attributes of destination websites play a role
Diana et al. (2017)	2017	Varied: Process moderated by reviews and social influence
Marlon and Luis (2022)	2022	Varied: Sentiment analysis offers insights

2.3. Information Credibility and Prior Knowledge

In a study by Kapoor (2022) the impact of social media-based UGC on the online reputation of tourist destination points was focused. The author examines the travellers' perceptions of UGC on social media to gain prior knowledge and assess the credibility of information shared by E-WOM about a destination. He also focused on a tourism's destination's official portal marketing. A model of E-WOM was used to evaluate the decision-making made by the tourists based on the social media UGC. Papadopoulos, Dionysopoulou, and Agiomirgianakis (2019) stated that social media sites these days have become a reliable and effective tool for tourists to plan their trips and other travel itineraries by gaining prior knowledge about the place; as per the analysis made by Ghandour and Bakalova (2014) social media highly influences the Generation Y tourists throughout the decision-making process of trips and tours. It was also observed that the rate of people searching for information on social media is lower than that of people searching for destination information on official state tourism websites. The study findings revealed a shift in the trend towards social media as a source of travel information. Young travellers' perceptions of destinations and their intentions to visit them were examined by Laurance, Wijaya, and Thio (2023) based on YouTube influencers' credibility and the quality of the information provided on the online portals. The study

results show that source credibility positively correlates with information quality, visit intention, and destination image.

2.4. Information Credibility and Tourist Decision Making

Credibility predicts the most frequently used type of information source, according to Kerstetter and Cho (2004). The findings challenge traditional thinking about factors affecting travellers' information search behaviours in the context of resort-based vacations and trips. Considering Chinese tourists for the study, González-Rodríguez, Díaz-Fernández, Bilgihan, Okumus, and Shi (2022) studied the impact of eWOM source legitimacy on a destination visit intention and online commitment. The findings indicated a lower perceived danger associated with destination visits; a lower perceived risk will possibly increase the perceived usefulness of the information, increasing the tourist's tendency to visit the location and their involvement in eWOM. Hussin et al. (2020) examined online information credibility among young people. This research adopted the radical change theory and proposed a new model to comprehend the information-related activities and relationships of young people. The findings emphasised that it is important to consider the credibility of online information as a tool or key to finding the knowledge and skill of the young population in evaluating the credibility of online information. Table 2 provides a systematic review of research examining the impact of information credibility on tourists' prior knowledge and decision-making processes.

Table 2. Review of studies on the influence of information credibility on prior knowledge and tourist decision-making.

Author name & year	Year	Influence of information credibility on prior knowledge / Tourist decision-making
Kapoor (2022)	2022	Positive-evaluates credibility based on prior knowledge
Papadopoulos et al. (2019)	2019	Positive-social media used for information gathering before holidays
Laurance et al. (2023)	2023	Positive-YouTube influencers positively affect information quality, destination image, and visit intention.
Ghandour and Bakalova (2014)	2014	Positive-generation Y people are highly influenced by social media when making travel decisions.
Kerstetter and Cho (2004)	2004	Positive-credibility of information crucial in shaping pre-existing knowledge
Hussin et al. (2020)	2020	Positive-quality of information from credible sources impacts overall perception.
González-Rodríguez et al. (2022)	2022	Positive-eWOM source credibility influences perceptions and plans

2.5. Moderating Role of Authenticity of the Post in Social Media

The authenticity of social media content undoubtedly plays a significant role in influencing tourists' decisions and overall preferences. Tourists heavily depend on social media posts to gather travel ideas and make informed choices. Authenticity, encompassing objective, constructive, and existential dimensions, shapes how tourists share content on social media. It also significantly impacts the development of the destination image (DI) in tourists' minds, subsequently influencing their intent to visit a particular location. However, the authenticity of travel imagery in the virtual realm is susceptible to manipulation on social media platforms, leading to a sense of disconnection from natural landscapes and a lack of genuine experiences. Wang and Skovira (2017) say that regardless of any technology or media, authenticity is a fundamental question for the existence of humans. The study found that the disposition of authenticity and quality moderates perceived authenticity and the usage of social media technology. Zhou, Lu, and Wang (2023) assert that tourists heavily rely on the authenticity of travel pictures or social media posts when making travel decisions. The findings highlight that in social media, authenticity, negotiation, and flow of information can be determined by the interaction between landscape alienation, media interaction or exposure, and personified experiences.

2.6. Proposed Model and Hypothesis

The proposed research model illustrates and outlines the relationships between the authenticity of social media posts, the response to social media sharing, information credibility, prior knowledge, and tourists' decision-making behaviour. Figure 1 provides a visual framework of this model for understanding the study's key constructs and hypotheses.

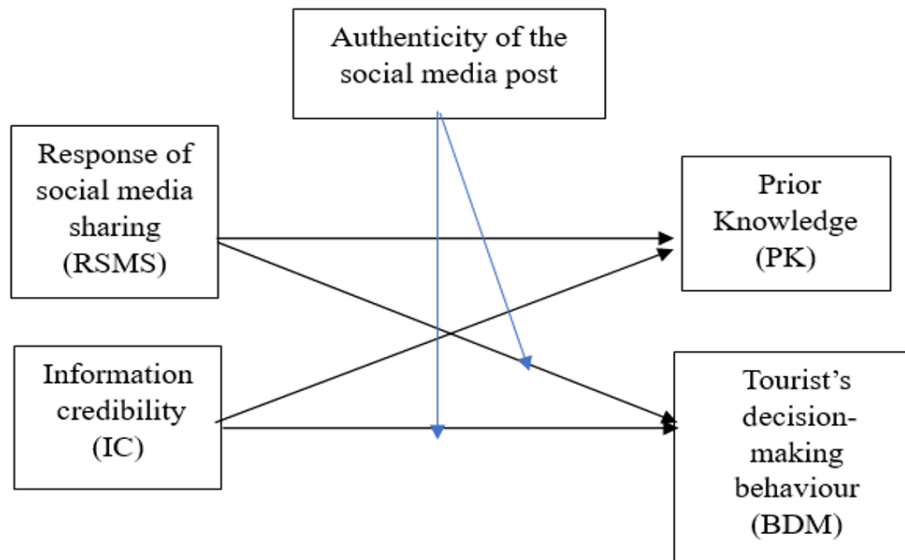


Figure 1. Research model.

2.7. Research Hypothesis

H₁: There is a correlation between response to social media sharing and prior knowledge.

H₂: There is a correlation between response to social media sharing and tourist decision-making behaviour.

H₃: There is a correlation between information credibility and prior knowledge.

H₄: There is a correlation between information credibility and tourist decision-making behaviour.

H₅: Authenticity of the social media post moderates the relationship between response to social media sharing and tourist decision-making behaviour.

H₆: Authenticity of the social media post moderates the relationship between information credibility and tourist decision-making behaviour.

2.8. Research Gap

Although the impacts and pivotal role of social media on travellers' reactions, decision-making procedures, and the significance of information authenticity and trustworthiness have all been well studied in the literature, there still needs to be a significant knowledge gap about the complex relationships between these variables. Few researchers have examined the complex ways that authenticity modifies social media posts and how it mainly affects travellers' decisions and reactions. Furthermore, more research needs to be devoted to examining the changing dynamics of social media campaigns that consider situations including both overtourism and undertourism. A thorough analysis of these factors would greatly aid in understanding the complexity of travellers' decisions in response to social media information, providing insightful information for traveller management and destination marketing plans.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Approach

The research approach adopted here is quantitative.

3.2. Sampling Design

The sampling strategy adopted is stratified random sampling. Shi (2015) conducted a study in Kunshan City, China, which demonstrates the superiority of stratified sampling over normal random sampling, particularly in representing a large city's population. India is a city with a massive population similar to that of China, so stratified sampling is best suited for this research.

3.3. Data Collection Method

Online surveys have been used as a tool for the collection of primary data. The primary data has been collected using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire. Standard instruments have been used to measure the proposed research variables.

3.4. Research Instrumentation

The instrumentation details are described as follows: Tourist decision-making behaviour is measured using three items adapted from Armutcu, Tan, Amponsah, Parida, and Ramkissoon (2023). Prior knowledge is measured using three items adapted from Jee-Hoon and Hye-Ji (2023). Likewise, the variable Information Credibility has six items, and the variable Response to Social Media Sharing has eight items adapted from Jiang et al. (2021) and Dedeoğlu, Van Niekerk, Küçükergin, De Martino, and Okumuş (2020) respectively. The moderating variables' authenticity of the post is measured using two items adapted from Kreling, Meier, and Reinecke (2022).

3.5. Sample Size

A survey form was distributed online to 700 respondents from the Delhi and National Capital Region. After collecting and processing data by removing duplicate, invalid, and missing entries, the sample size was 511. The response rate was 73%.

3.6. Statistical Tools

The primary data collected was analysed statistically using Structural Equation Modelling. The software used to analyse the data is Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS).

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Care was taken to ensure ethical guidelines were followed while collecting the data from the respondents. The respondent details have been kept confidential, and an informed consent form was given to the respondents before data collection.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The demographic analysis in Table 3 shows that males are the major respondents (55.2%), whereas the remaining are female respondents, whose ratio is (44.8%). The age groups of 20 to 25 years (16.2%) and 26 to 30 years are observed to be greater with (35.2%) and 31 to 35 years (32.9%). Also, 36 and above hold a ratio of 15.7%.

4.1. Test of Reliability

The reliability of the scale adapted is tested using Cronbach's alpha test, where an alpha value above .7 is considered reliable and good. The research scale has five variables, and Table 4 clearly shows that Cronbach's alpha value of all the variables is above 0.7. The obtained value insists that the scale is significantly reliable.

Table 3. Analysis of the demographic profile.

Demographic profile		Frequency (f)	Per cent (%)	Valid %	Cumulative %
Gender	Male	282	55.2	55.2	55.2
	Female	229	44.8	44.8	100.0
	Total	511	100.0	100.0	-
Age (In years)	20 to 25	83	16.2	16.2	16.2
	26 to 30	180	35.2	35.2	51.5
	31 to 35	168	32.9	32.9	84.3
	36 and above	80	15.7	15.7	100.0
	Total	511	100.0	100.0	-
Marital status	Single	55	10.8	10.8	10.8
	Married	382	74.8	74.8	85.5
	Divorced	74	14.5	14.5	100.0
	Total	511	100.0	100.0	-

Table 4. Cronbach analysis.

Variable name	No. of items	Alpha value (a)
Tourist decision-making behaviour (BDM)	3	0.886
Prior knowledge (PK)	3	0.874
Information credibility (IC)	6	0.733
Response to social media sharing (RSMS)	8	0.838
Authenticity of the post (AUTH)	2	0.834

4.2. Factor Analysis

It aims to determine underlying factors that explain the pattern of relationships within a set of observed variables. Table 5 tabulates the KMO Bartlett's and the PCA (Principal Component Analysis).

Table 5. KMO and Bartlett's test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy.		0.819
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square	5791.815
	Df	231
	Sig.	0.000

As Table 5 shows, the obtained value of KMO is .819. It is close to '1'. The p-value obtained is .000 (<0.05). It indicates that the variables are significant.

Table 6. Rotated component matrix^a.

Variable	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
BDM1			0.895				
BDM2			0.920				
BDM3			0.886				
PK1		0.826					
PK2		0.880					
PK3		0.873					
IC1		0.883					
IC2		0.764					
IC3					0.861		
IC4					0.848		
IC5							0.863
IC6							0.822
AUTH1				0.927			
AUTH2				0.926			
RSMS1						0.867	

Variable	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
RSMS2						0.857	
RSMS3	0.787						
RSMS4	0.861						
RSMS5	0.834						
RSMS6	0.845						
RSMS7	0.822						
RSMS8	0.820						

Note: Extraction method: PCA (principal component analysis).
 Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.a
 a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Table 6 presented the rotated component matrix. It can be observed that the coefficient absolute values, meaning the variances, are maximised with reduced dimensionality.

4.3. SEM Analysis

The SEM model diagram shows the correlations of the given variables (Figure 2).

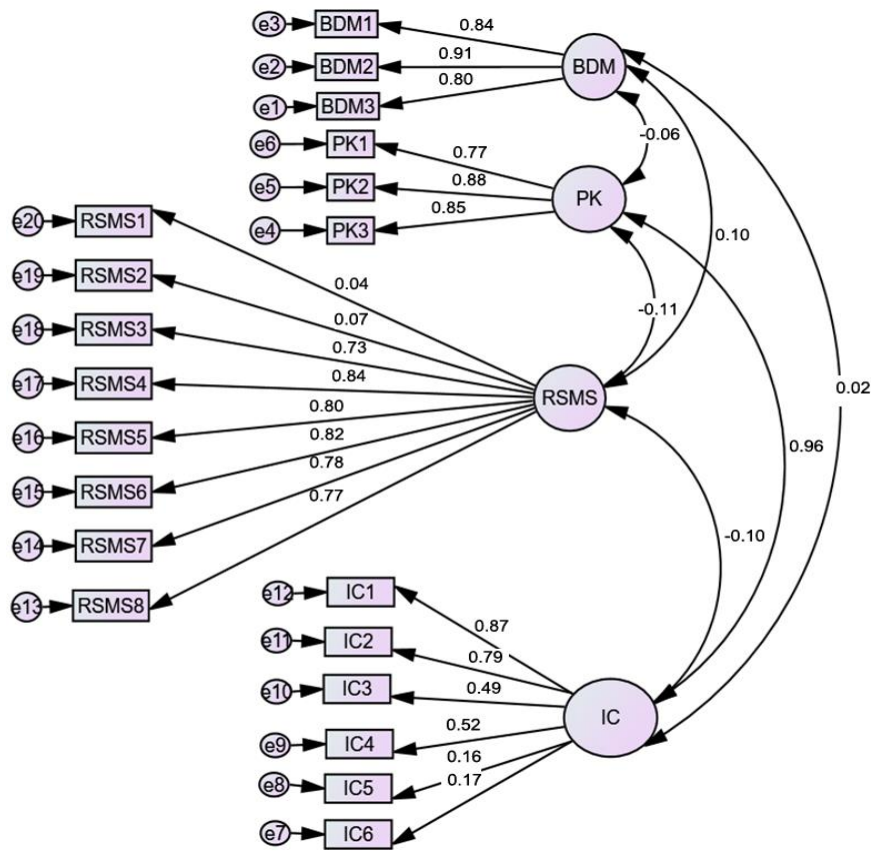


Figure 2. SEM model.

The degree of freedom (dof) is computed, and the value obtained is 162. The Chi-square value obtained is 308.383 at a probability level of .000. It makes it clear that the proposed model is a good fit. After the computations, it is identified that the CMIN/DF (Chi-square minimum/degree of freedom) value is 1.904, and the root-mean-square (RMR) value is 0.32, with a significant p-value of .000. Further, it has been identified that the goodness-fit-index (GFI) value is .943. All the values are within the acceptable range. The CFI value obtained is .972 (almost close to '1'), indicating a good fit for the model (Chen, 2007). The obtained parsimony values show that the model is neither simple nor complex. The estimation of function minimum fit function (FMIN) shows that the model is a good fit, with index values within an acceptable range (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). The FMIN value

obtained is .605. The RMSEA value obtained is .042 with a p-close value of .000, indicating the perfect fit of the model. The regression weights of the model are presented in Table 7.

The regression results show a p-value of 0.000. It can be inferred that there is a significant relationship between the proposed variables RSMS (Response to Social Media Sharing) and BDM (Tourist Decision Making Behaviour). Therefore, Hypothesis H2, 'There is a correlation between response to social media sharing and tourist decision-making behaviour,' is accepted. It can also be inferred that a significant relationship exists between the proposed variables IC (Information Credibility) and PK (Prior Knowledge). Therefore, Hypothesis H3, 'There is a correlation between Information Credibility and Prior Knowledge,' is also accepted. However, Hypotheses H1 and H4 are rejected because the p-value of PK← RSMS is 0.718 and the p-value of BDM← IC is 0.885, which is greater than 0.05.

Table 7. Regression weights.

Relationship between variables		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PK	<--- IC	6.182	1.815	3.406	***
BDM	<--- IC	-0.051	0.352	-0.145	0.885
PK	<--- RSMS	-0.011	0.031	-0.361	0.718
BDM	<--- RSMS	0.121	0.061	1.985	***
IC6	<--- IC	1.000	-	-	-
IC5	<--- IC	1.035	0.319	3.240	0.001
IC4	<--- IC	3.531	1.067	3.307	***
IC3	<--- IC	3.635	1.108	3.280	0.001
IC2	<--- IC	6.625	1.940	3.414	***
IC1	<--- IC	6.873	2.005	3.429	***
RSMS8	<--- RSMS	1.000	-	-	-
RSMS7	<--- RSMS	1.086	0.058	18.610	***
RSMS6	<--- RSMS	1.020	0.052	19.697	***
RSMS5	<--- RSMS	1.104	0.058	19.023	***
RSMS4	<--- RSMS	1.147	0.056	20.312	***
RSMS3	<--- RSMS	1.013	0.059	17.117	***
RSMS2	<--- RSMS	.083	0.054	1.553	0.120
RSMS1	<--- RSMS	0.043	0.051	0.838	0.402
PK1	<--- PK	1.000	-	-	-
PK2	<--- PK	1.144	0.054	21.249	***
PK3	<--- PK	1.123	0.055	20.463	***
BDM1	<--- BDM	1.000	-	-	-
BDM2	<--- BDM	1.205	0.053	22.936	***
BDM3	<--- BDM	0.970	0.047	20.864	***

Note: ***: Significant correlation; S.E.: Standardised estimates; C.R.: Composite reliability; P: Probability; IC: Information credibility.

Table 8. Moderation effect on response to social media sharing and tourist decision making.

Y: BDM						
X: RSMS						
W: AUTH						
Sample size: 511						
Df1		df2				
1.00		507.0000				
Model summary						
MSE	F		Df1		Df2	
13.8457	0.8596		3.0000		507.0000	
Model						
-	Coeff.	S.E.	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	11.1749	5.1654	2.1634	0.0310	1.0266	21.3232
RSMST	0.2440	0.1778	1.3726	0.1705	0.1053	0.5933
AUTH	0.9085	0.6998	1.2982	0.1948	-0.4664	2.2835
Int_1	-0.0342	0.0240	-1.4234	0.1552	-0.0814	0.0130

Note: LLCI: Lower limit confidence interval; ULCI: upper limit confidence interval; P: probability; S.E.: standardised estimates.

4.4. Moderator Analysis

The graph is generated for the moderating analysis based on the values of Table 8.

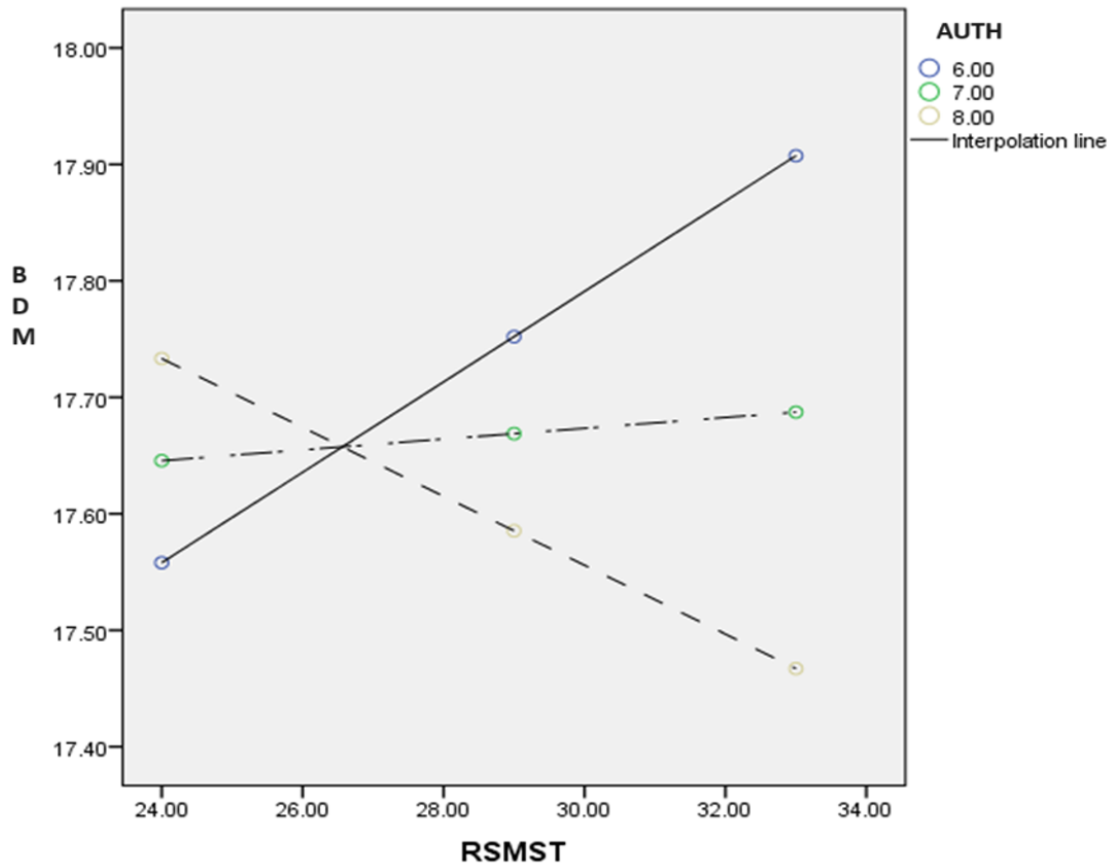


Figure 3. Moderation effect of authenticity on response to social media sharing and tourist decision making.

When examining the interaction effect, if the p-value obtained is less than 0.005, the moderating effect is considered significant between an independent and dependent variable. Figure 3 shows that the p-value obtained is .1552, greater than 0.005 in this case. Therefore, the hypothesis H5 is rejected.

Table 9. Moderation effect on Information credibility and tourist decision making.

X: IC						
W: AUTH						
Sample size: 511						
Coding of binary Y for logistic regression analysis:						
Df1	Df2					
3.000	507.000					
Model summary						
MSE	F	Df1	Df2			
13.401	6.491	3.0000	507.000			
Model						
-	Coeff.	S.E.	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	17.653	0.162	108.895	0.000	17.334	17.971
IC	0.247	0.059	4.175	0.000	0.131	0.363
AUTH	0.063	0.093	0.674	0.501	-0.120	0.245
Int_1	0.051	0.035	1.468	0.003	-0.017	0.119

Note: LLCI: Lower limit confidence interval; S.E.: Standardised estimates; ULCI: Upper limit confidence interval; P: Probability; IC: Information credibility.

The graph is generated for the moderating analysis based on the values of Table 9.

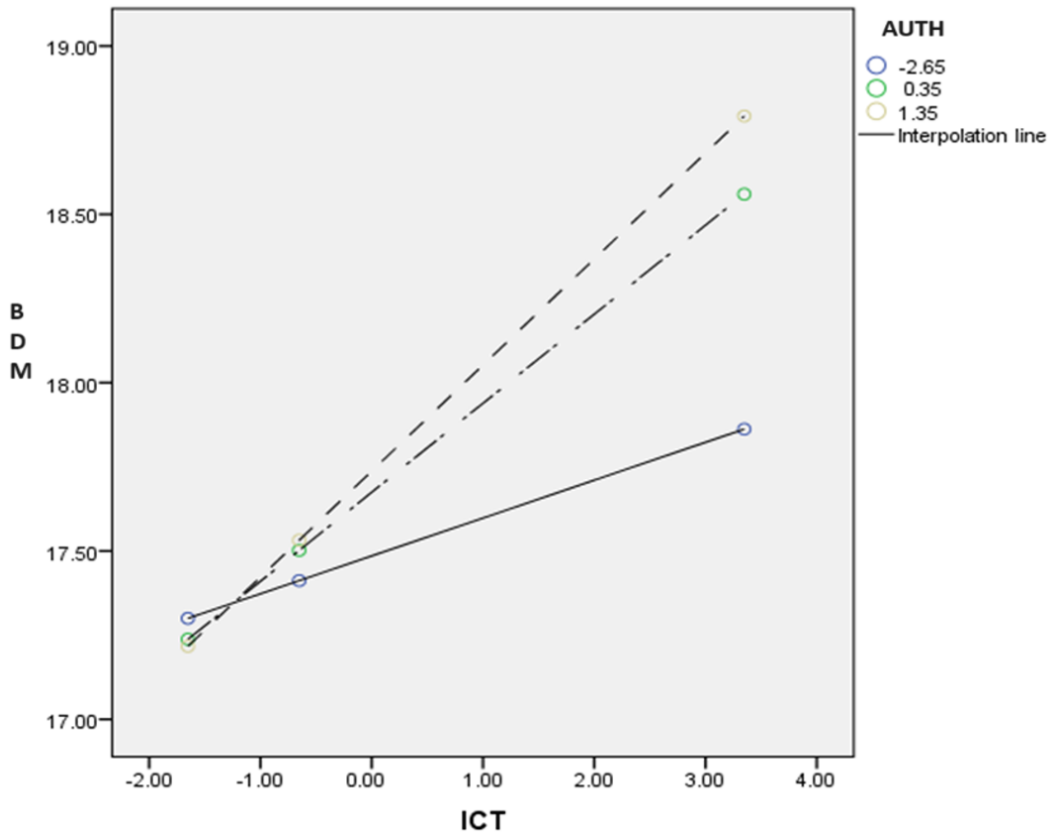


Figure 4. Moderation effect of authenticity on information credibility and tourist decision making.

It can be inferred from Figure 4 that the p-value obtained on examining the interaction effect of the variable authenticity between the variable's information credibility and tourist decision-making behaviour is 0.003, which is less than 0.005. Therefore, the hypothesis H6 is accepted.

5. DISCUSSION

Table 10 below tabulates the results of the hypothesis testing.

Table 10. Hypothesis testing results.

No.	Hypothesis	p-value obtained	Result
1	There is a correlation between response to social media sharing and prior knowledge.	0.718	Rejected
2	There is a correlation between response to social media sharing and tourist decision-making behaviour	0.000	Accepted
3	There is a correlation between information credibility and prior knowledge.	0.000	Accepted
4	There is a correlation between information credibility and tourist decision-making behaviour	0.885	Rejected
5	The authenticity of social media posts moderates the relationship between response to social media sharing and tourist decision-making behaviour.	0.155	Rejected
6	The authenticity of social media posts moderates the relationship between information credibility and tourist decision-making behaviour.	0.003	Accepted

Despite a wealth of existing studies on the effect of digital or e-marketing, mainly Instagram marketing, on travellers' decision-making processes, many topics still require further in-depth knowledge. Only a few studies examine the influence of popular social media platforms, i.e., Instagram's impact on travellers' decision-making

behaviour. Thus, the current study intends to bridge this gap, and the current chapter discusses the various factors, i.e., consumer engagement and its impact on tourist decision-making behaviour, moderating role of digital marketing interactions in tourism decision-making, and even information quality of travel reviews and its influence on tourists' decision-making behaviour. According to the study, Instagram has emerged as a primary information source for informants to select travel destinations. Furthermore, these results demonstrate that quality information in Instagram posts plays a significant role in travellers' decision-making. For analysing various elements and their impact on the Instagram platform, 511 respondents, i.e., travellers, have been selected for the study. Of these, 282 respondents were male, and the remaining were female, indicating that women are equally taking part in travelling activities and use the Instagram platform for various travel-related information searches. Also, the study used SEM analysis to evaluate the impact of Instagram marketing on tourists' decision-making processes. The findings demonstrate that Instagram users pay close attention to posts shared by other users or influencers about popular tourist spots. It enhances informants' insights into destinations and draws more users to visit these places by sharing insightful and helpful posts about destinations on Instagram (Ismarizal & Kusumah, 2023). An appealing Instagram feed with attractive photos, insightful descriptions, and engaging user comments can be important factors that attract travellers to famous tourist spots. Social media platforms nowadays offer a beginning-to-end process for sharing knowledge, insights, and viewpoints in terms of tourism destinations. It has become common for social media users to post about their travel experiences, restaurant meals, sightseeing excursions, and other active lifestyle events during their journeys. Eventually, the discourse can shape the users' perceptions and choices when exploring and selecting the places they wish to visit (Hanan & Putit, 2013). Travellers' information is considered objective and free of commercial content, making it reliable and valuable as a resource before a traveller decides where to go (Hanan & Putit, 2014).

Instagram has become one of the most extensively used social media platforms since its launch in 2010. More than an entertainment platform, it eventually becomes an information-providing tool regardless of the field (Soni & Deshmukh, 2019). It has become a global content-generating platform with over 800 million active users and 25 million company profiles. Over 50% of the platform's users confirm checking it at least once daily, while another 35% report doing it numerous times. Instagram has become a must-have. Tourism is the first industry among many that heavily relies on visual imagery for marketing purposes. With the development of travellers' behaviour in the current era, they tend to use social media to find information and make decisions accordingly. Additionally, tourists may consider posting on popular social media platforms, implying that engaging content on these platforms could potentially encourage tourists to consider visiting tourist destinations (Ismarizal & Kusumah, 2023). Online reviews have become a simple process for travellers to revisit and evaluate travel-related experiences (Fileri & McLeay, 2014). Online reviews relating to prior travel experiences and knowledge play a significant role in travel-based decision-making (Assaker & O'Connor, 2021). To lower risk whilst making travel decisions, some travellers heavily rely on other users' evaluations to assess destinations (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

According to existing research (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020) this is partly because people perceive comments from social media reviews as less biased than those from marketing employees. With particular reference to tourism destinations, online reviews can provide significant insights into how travellers evaluate their experiences using destinations and services (Bigne, Ruiz, & Curras-Perez, 2019). When choosing a destination, travellers might perceive increased risk owing to the characteristics of off-site service providers and the temporary nature of many tourism-based activities (Su, Tang, & Nawijn, 2020). Consequently, by referring to online reviews, travellers aim to lower their perceived risk and uncertainty (Rinka & Pratt, 2018). Positive online reviews are critical for tourism businesses to build a positive image of their place and retain enduring relationships with travellers (Bigné, William, & Soria-Olivas, 2020). Tourists have sophisticated thoughts when making purchasing decisions and can easily access information when choosing the appropriate site. Modern travellers increasingly rely on social media platforms like Instagram to plan, research, and share their travel experiences. Instagram's vast

repository of UGC provides travellers with a wealth of information, including authentic visuals and peer reviews, to inform their decisions. The platform's visual nature makes it an ideal tool for travellers to discover destinations, gather insights, and seek recommendations from fellow travellers. However, it's crucial to critically evaluate the credibility of information shared on Instagram to ensure informed travel choices.

Generally, the total number of followers on an influencer's Instagram page signifies its credibility. Only a few researchers (Archer, Wolf, & Nalloor, 2021; Kapoor, Balaji, Jiang, & Jebarajakirthy, 2022; Rinka & Pratt, 2018) have examined the impact of social media marketing on travellers' intention to travel. Nonetheless, these studies have not considered the significance of information credibility as a mediating element in Instagram marketing. Thus, the study mainly aims to assess Instagram accounts' information credibility in the travel industry. A user can resemble the influencers' content as a suggestion from a friend, which eventually creates greater credibility with the posts and thus results in a greater interest in purchasing the product in general marketing or visiting the place in tourism marketing in the future. Because influencers can share their perspectives and are not affiliated without being affiliated with any corporate company, their posts and information are typically considered credible sources. Influencers must talk about topics properly, which lends credibility to the information they provide. According to (Kim & Kim, 2021) credibility increases the perceived quality of information. Businesses can use the Instagram platform to strengthen consumer awareness of their brands, lend them better credibility, and promote a communication channel with their target audience (Wally & Koshy, 2014). The findings of Faisal and Dhusia (2022) exhibit that trustworthiness has a considerable effect on influencers' credibility, while credibility and intimate self-disclosures (ISDs) strongly impact tourists' travel behaviour. Trustworthiness and expertise are the two main elements of information credibility (Faisal & Dhusia, 2022). Attractiveness, reliability, knowledge, and ISD will positively and significantly influence the credibility of travel influencers and tourists' willingness to travel (Faisal & Dhusia, 2022). As suggested by Paul and Nikolaev (2021) travellers should not depend only on information they find on social media platforms. Information from travellers who have already visited a particular destination spot seemed more reliable to prospective travellers (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013). Similarly, the current study's findings accepted the hypothesis that the authenticity of the social media post moderates the relationship between information credibility, prior knowledge and tourist decision-making. Since travel is an experiential industry, potential travellers frequently choose their destination or trip plans based on the experiences of others that they have posted on social media to lower risks or uncertainties (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Users with little prior knowledge, regarding the particular destination seemed to collect information from social media, which indicates that social media platforms help users strengthen their prior knowledge. Similarly, the findings accepted that there is a strong correlation between information credibility and prior knowledge.

6. CONCLUSION

Global e-commerce is expanding quickly, leading to more travellers sharing their thoughts on hotels, restaurants, and other travel-related products on various social media platforms. Travellers and travel agencies use social media platforms to communicate, share information, and promote different destination spots and travel-related activities. The invasion of social media platforms has significantly improved the travel industry. These platforms have drastically changed how travellers plan and share their unique travel experiences, collect information, and get suggestions. Social media can be considered the most essential information source for travellers at all stages of their decision-making process. The organisation, planning, and evaluation of products and information searching relating to tourism are some of the critical elements of this process. Information is vital for making decisions regarding travel. The information should be precise and essential at each phase of the procedure. This is where Instagram has become a saviour for people who love travelling without prior experience or knowledge. Instagram is one of the platforms that acts as an information hub nowadays. To the best of the author's knowledge, the current study is one of the few studies that deal with information credibility, prior knowledge, and

tourists' decision-making behaviour. Credibility on Instagram posts has increased tourists' travel decision-making process and revisit intentions. As such, fostering credibility and online reviews in Instagram posts has been proposed to be vital.

Regarding the decision-making process resulting from Instagram posts, the components that play a significant role are social media sharing, prior knowledge, information credibility, and, eventually, the authenticity of the social media posts. This is why the current study integrates all these components to evaluate the impact of Instagram marketing on tourist decision-making. For travellers of the current generation, a new destination is not a new place, as they can see everything clearly on Instagram posts. The current study has highlighted the significance of comprehending the online review tool to understand better the travellers' decision-making process, which is the need of the hour as the tourism industry has primarily started relying on social media platforms, in general, and Instagram, in particular. The destination is one of the significant choices made during the tourist decision-making process. Various marketing factors, together with the tourist's traits and awareness level of the location, essentially influence the final choice of tourism destination. The culmination of these multifaceted components ultimately shapes a visitor's purpose and final destination selection. Understanding the types of Instagram posts that influence travellers at large is indispensable. Thus, the current research is conducted to understand the relationship between Instagram marketing and travellers' decision-making process. Travellers are increasingly using online reviews to evaluate and compare travel options. Many travellers use Instagram accounts to support their travel journey by sharing information, ideas, thoughts, and experiences. With these platforms, they can gather information, ideas, opinions, and experiences that assist their travels. By sharing and comparing their travel experiences, travellers can identify the benefits and drawbacks of every travel-related service. Previously, travellers largely depended on destination management organisations because of their expected credibility. However, Instagram has changed everything and provides only credible information. For Instagram users, i.e., travellers, to be more effective, especially when promoting destinations and developing a more robust social presence, their posts should have credibility. The credibility of influencers is one of the most important elements for users. Though the current study does not consider the role of influencers, two crucial factors, i.e., credibility and online reviews, are considered. These two elements play a significant role in travellers' decision-making process.

To conclude, the selected research topic remains quite relevant. Instagram posts and content have their ways of influencing users and are still quite potent today. As the findings emphasise, Instagram is still a valuable informational resource for travellers, and working with influencers could contribute to expanding the audience and reaching new potential destination markets. Also, it was established that the authenticity of the Instagram posts would positively contribute to tourist decision-making choices. The current study has also validated the relationship between information credibility, prior knowledge, and tourist decision-making.

6.1. Implications

The research results emphasised that Instagram posts and tourism-related content have positively influenced users and are still quite potent today. As the results accentuate, Instagram is still a valuable informational resource for tourists, and working with influencers might contribute to expanding the audience and reaching new potential destination markets. Therefore, the factors considered in this research can be helpful and effective to marketers and product developers concerned with the tourism sector. This study provides marketers and policymakers insight into factors influencing information credibility of Instagram posts on tourists' decision-making behaviour. Understanding these factors might offer a competitive edge to organisations within the tourism industry.

6.2. Recommendations and Future Scope

This study contributes to tourism literature by examining interrelationships between responses to social media sharing, information credibility, authenticity of Instagram posts, and tourists' decision-making. This study

investigated the decision-making process within the field of tourists; henceforth, further study can be niched towards other intention behaviours of tourists. The study neglected to consider one significant influence factor, namely the role of social media influencers. Hence, future studies can consider this factor and figure out how far influencers play a major role in tourists' decision-making process. Above all, the reliability and ethical values followed by influencers should also be considered in future studies, as tourists are more likely to be influenced by these so-called influencers.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the Sharda University Greater Noida, India has granted approval for this study (Ref. No. SSMFE/2024/07).

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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